



PSC NEWS

Missouri Public Service Commission

Contact: Kevin Kelly

Phone: (573) 751-9300

Governor Office Building, Suite 900

FY-04-209

PSC APPROVES USE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY TO HELP THOSE WHO MAY BE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING TO MORE EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE OVER THE TELEPHONE

Jefferson City (June 15, 2004)--State-of-the-art telephone technology which displays text on a screen as the voice caller speaks to someone deaf or hard of hearing will become a part of Relay Missouri under a decision reached by the Missouri Public Service Commission.

Called Captioned Telephone Voice Carry Over (VCO), this technology using a Captioned Telephone (CapTel™), has been used on a trial basis in Missouri since February of 2003. Approximately 100 people participated in the trial. Missouri was one of the first states to use the technology on a trial basis.

Utilizing voice recognition software to translate an operator's spoken word to text, these telephones allow the user to listen and read the text of what the other party has said almost simultaneously on one standard telephone line. Prior to this type of technology, traditional voice carry over technology utilized manual typing to deliver the spoken information and required two telephone lines to deliver both the audio and text information to a consumer.

The Commission approved making this type of technology available to eligible customers in Missouri. At the same time, the Commission determined that it would not change the current Relay Missouri surcharge of 10 cents a month per telephone access line in Missouri. Under state law, the Relay Missouri surcharge is reviewed at least every two years, but not more than on an annual basis. The Commission last set the Relay Missouri surcharge in April 2003.

How this technology works: A caller using a CapTel™ phone dials the telephone number of the party they seek to communicate with. The captioned telephone routes the call through to a call center, connecting the call to the called party. At the call center, a specially trained operator re-voices whatever is said by the called party. Those words from the operator are then converted by a computer to text, are sent over the telephone line, and almost immediately appear as words on a display screen on the captioned telephone for the user to read. The CapTel™ phone user can also hear, to their best ability, the voice of the called party through an amplified headset.

The Missouri Assistive Technology Advisory Council is responsible for distribution of CapTel™ phone sets and other types of adaptive telephone equipment needed by Missourians with disabilities. To be eligible for adaptive equipment, the person must: 1) be a Missouri resident; 2) have an active telephone in their home; 3) have a certified disability preventing them from accessing or effectively using basic telephone services with standard telephone equipment; and 4) have an annual adjusted income of less than \$60,000. For more information, please call 1-800-647-8557 (voice) or 1-800-647-8558 (TTY).

Background: The Missouri Public Service Commission oversees the administration of Relay Missouri in the state. Relay Missouri began, under Missouri law, in 1991 and provides deaf, hard-of-hearing and speech-impaired citizens access to the telephone network. Relay Missouri is currently provided in Missouri through a contract with Sprint.